


LANDING MY UNEXPECTED DREAM JOB

After falling in love with **Park City, Utah**, airline pilot **Murray Gardner** develops an unexpected passion for building and selling luxury homes.

A photograph of Murray and Felicity Gardner standing in a wooden structure under construction. Murray is on the right, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, and Felicity is on the left, wearing a denim jacket over a grey top. They are both smiling. The background shows wooden framing and a view of a snowy mountain range.

MURRAY AND
FELICITY GARDNER

Murray Gardner is the kind of person who knows what he likes and makes it happen.

At just 3 years old, the young Australian dreamed of becoming a fighter pilot. So he went on to attend the Defence Force Academy and fly fighter jets for the Royal Australian Air Force. When he was on an exchange tour with the U.S. Navy, Murray became instantly enamored with a small town tucked into Utah's eastern Wasatch Mountains. So he acted on it. "I fell in love with Park City on day one," he says. "On day two, I bought a condo."

This self-awareness and gusto for life follows Murray wherever he goes, including to the elite Top Gun aviation program as a weapons instructor and to Hong Kong, where he flew trans-Pacific jumbo jets and negotiated labor contracts for a commercial airline. He also met his wife, Felicity, in Hong Kong while they were both waiting for a taxi one Sunday night.

Twelve years later, they moved with their two children to Park City full time (another dream of Murray's). The couple enjoyed the experience of building their home so much that Murray and Felicity founded the husband-wife power team called Gardner Group, a one-stop shop for custom home creation. And, in October 2016, Murray became a licensed REALTOR®, seeing it as a synergistic extension of their business.

"I'm approaching the point in my life where long-haul flying is really onerous," he says. "As we contemplated retirement from that, I had a bit more spare time. I don't play golf, so real estate seemed like an idea whose time was right."

A Natural Path to Real Estate

Coming as no surprise to those who know him, Murray is a real fit for real estate.

As a dual-career agent in the Park City market center, he has produced more than \$13.9 million in his first year. He attributes such success to a three-prong approach for his tech-savvy and financially focused luxury clients:

- Because the list price is so crucial to how fast the home sells – and for how much – Murray spends considerable effort researching and discussing the price with owners.
- To ensure prime condition of the home, Felicity provides staging services at no additional cost. "Very few people have the imagination that Felicity's got in being able to visualize what it might be," Murray says. "I think staging has become as important as marketing."
- Additionally, he uses Keller Williams' in-house services and an outside firm to spend 20 to 30 percent of his potential commission on marketing that captures Felicity's staging work to create stunning webpages, videos, 3D walk-throughs, and social media promotions.

"I believe the client deserves this degree of commitment," Murray says, noting that this is true no matter the budget.

Gardner Group initially bought land, built beautiful homes and sold them. Over a few years, it evolved into the Gardners' passion: a full-service company that still

does property development, but that also takes on real estate transactions as well as clients who seek their project leadership and interior design expertise for new homes and remodels. Because Murray and Felicity deliberately structured all of Gardner Group to model the fiduciary duty that real estate agents have to their clients, they operate separately of the contractors and architects to oversee the home-building process from beginning to end. The goal is for their clients to have less stress and a better product. "We can actually be our clients' representative in every sense of the word," Murray says. "Their interests come first."

Murray and Felicity have built an unconventional real estate business and are an inspiring reminder to expand your mind as to what's possible in the world and within the industry.

Laser-Focused

As an agent with often complicated transactions and a co-creator of 7,000- to 12,000-square-foot homes, Murray has to be disciplined, organized and well-versed at making decisions. These are characteristics he has honed for decades, so they come naturally to him now.

"Military pilots are among the most disciplined people on earth or they're dead – it's that serious," he says.

Murray's day usually starts around 5 a.m. with reviewing his calendar, setting alarms for event reminders, reading emails and going over to-do lists. He uses Microsoft Project to keep all jobs on track with timelines and critical paths for co-dependent tasks. Once their son is at school, he and Felicity have coffee and chat about what's going on with the business and then he's off to the job site by 8, where he often stays all day. Nancy Seraphin, CEO of Keller Williams Park City, says Murray is "one of the most organized individuals I've ever met."

That's not to say Murray isn't creative.

He loves working with the architects and engineers

to envision the framing, integrate the structural steel and plan placement for huge vista-sweeping windows. He also uses innovative ways to sort out timeline and budget issues. But, he admits, it's his indispensable partner who flexes the most artistic muscle.

Indispensable Partners

Felicity, who grew up on the River Thames near London, was previously a teacher and curriculum developer in England, Brunei, Qatar and Hong Kong. Having used inventive ways to educate, she enjoys doing the same as Gardner Group's resident interior designer and stager, working with clients to pick out hundreds of materials, furniture pieces and accessories so that the space is special. "I love a home to be warm and welcoming," Felicity says. "It should fit the custom needs of our clients, function well and take advantage of the environment."

With so many things needing to be done, Murray says he and Felicity talk "about a thousand times a day." But this is not stressful, he says, calling their divvying of duties "the easiest thing in the world."

The secret is simple: if it's organizational, Murray does it; if it's creative, Felicity does it.

Another great relationship is that of Murray and his Keller Williams market center. A few months before he got his license, Murray spoke with a close friend who had just left her previous brokerage because it emphasized only the top few producers. "She spent quite a bit of time looking," Murray says. "And she suggested I should talk with Keller Williams, which I did, and I think that's been a marriage made in heaven."

Murray loves the educational instruction Keller Williams provides, particularly Ignite, which he

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– Murray Gardner

calls "some of the best training I've ever had." But the most essential reason he thrives is the people. He says he frequently leans on his administrative support team, the brokers and Seraphin, who meets with him monthly to provide advice and guidance.

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And Seraphin agrees. "He loves the business because he embraces fully his role as a fiduciary in the client relationship," she says. "He also enjoys the human dynamics, as he is a problem solver at heart. His positive outlook and wonderful, keen sense of humor are embraced by all of us. **kw**



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